

The following interview was recorded on 30 November 1955 between Major Greathouse and the following officers: Captain Kane and 1st Lt Smith.

MAJ GREATHOUSE: Would you state your name, rank, service number and organization.

CAPT KANE: Francis H. Kane, Captain, AO 509146, MATS 46th Air Transport Squadron, Kelly AFB, Texas.

MAJ G: And your name?

1LT SMITH: John H. Smith, Jr., 1st Lieutenant, AO 2229715, 46th Air Transport Squadron, Kelly AFB, Texas.

MAJ G: Well, I'm Major Greathouse from the Directorate of Flight Safety Research at Morton AFB. As you know, we have taken over the investigation of the C-54 accident which occurred some 30 miles west of Las Vegas which was on the same mission that you are on. Now, first I'd like to tell you that this investigation and what we are talking about here is for investigation purposes only. It will not be disseminated to anybody else. Anything you might say cannot be used against you. The primary purpose being that we're trying to prevent other accidents that could possibly be caused by similar actions. First, Captain Kane, what is your experience as a pilot?

CAPT K: I have been flying since 1934. I have an Airline Transport Rating which I picked up in 1946. I have approximately 5400 hours in the Air Force and approximately 2500 civilian hours.

MAJ G: How much of that time in the Air Force is in C-54 aircraft?

CAPT K: Approximately, I'd say, 3500 hours. I'm not too sure.

MAJ G: How long have you been a MATS aircraft commander?

CAPT K: On this tour I've been a MATS aircraft commander two years.

MAJ G: Has most of that been at Kelly field?

CAPT K: All of it has been at Kelly field.

MAJ G: Do you have a green card?

CAPT K: I have a green card, yes, Sir.

MAJ G: Captain Kane, we picked up the master flight plan that was filed with CAA here and the front part of it had your name as pilot on it. Did you file that flight plan?

CAPT K: I was asked to, yes, Sir.

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MAJ G: A representative of this mission didn't file it then. You were over there and wrote it out as it was written out.

CAPT K: That's right. I was requested to.

MAJ G: Did you put Lt Pappas's name on the back of that for the purpose of both aircraft using the same master flight plan?

CAPT K: No.

MAJ G: The flight plan as it was indicated in the remarks section indicated "Weather Checked by Pilot." Do you recall writing that?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir, I did.

MAJ G: Were you briefed to use that particular expression on this particular flight?

CAPT K: No, Sir, I just wanted to clear myself.

MAJ G: I understand it's a common expression but no longer authorized.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: Were you briefed not to file a DD Form 175 here at Burbank?

CAPT K: No, Sir.

MAJ G: The reason I asked that, there was a message that came out directing that all Air Force flights would leave a Form 175 with somebody at an airport regardless of what type of an airport it was. I thought maybe you might have been briefed on that.

CAPT K: No.

MAJ G: How good have the CAA weather briefings been here at Burbank on your trip?

CAPT K: There hasn't been too much. Of course, outside of one morning we had VFR weather at all times outside of the Burbank area.

MAJ G: More or less CAVU conditions in the destination area at all times.

CAPT K: That's right.

MAJ G: Captain Kane, could you ask for your weather at your destination for your clearance. Could you use your actual destination or did you just have to call and ask for Las Vegas weather?

CAPT K: We had to call them and ask for the Las Vegas weather.

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MAJ G: were you flying out here when the route change was made that changed your IFR to VFR portion of the flight from the Las Vegas range to the Goodsprings homer?

CAPT K: No, Sir. Lt Pappas was flying here at the time.

MAJ G: I see. Do you understand where that directive came from to change that?

CAPT K: No, Sir, I don't.

MAJ G: Had you flown the route since it had been changed to the Goodsprings turnoff?

CAPT K: Yes, I did when I came back the second time, it was changed and I could see no reasons I shouldn't use it as long as I was VFR.

MAJ G: Who was the, or as far as you knew, what person changed that route?

CAPT K: I believe Lt Pappas was the one who wanted that on account of the jets flying over the Las Vegas area there.

MAJ G: Was that the only reason given?

CAPT K: That's the only reason I know of.

MAJ G: I understand there might have been some consideration given to time -- it saved ten minutes.

CAPT K: It saved some time, yes.

MAJ G: But you don't know where the directive came from.

CAPT K: No, Sir, I don't.

MAJ G: In your flights to Watertown had you ever received any route advisories from March Flight Service Center?

CAPT K: No, Sir, I never have. Weather has always been good.

MAJ G: You asked them for the weather on your return trip to Burbank?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir, prior to takeoff.

MAJ G: And they gave it to you.

CAPT K: Yes, of course, I called Las Vegas and asked them about Burbank weather coming back.

MAJ G: I see. Had you received any route advisories from Flight Service coming back to Burbank?

CAPT K: No, I never have.

MAJ G: I believe that would be a prime responsibility in this case of a P or PG class field in that they have to keep the Air Force aircraft advised. Where would you ask for weather after you had taken off from here going to your destination? At what point in your flight do you usually ask for weather to determine if your destination weather has changed since your takeoff?

CAPT K: Right now, Las Vegas.

MAJ G: At Las Vegas. Is that something new or was that the old procedure.

CAPT K: No, that's new.

MAJ G: Is that from Nellis tower?

CAPT K: Yes, it was Nellis tower.

MAJ G: On "B" Baker.

CAPT K: Baker, that's right. Occasionally UnF.

MAJ G: Have you ever landed up in the prohibited area without making a contact with a ground station there? Or not a ground station, but someone on the ground?

CAPT K: Yes, I have.

MAJ G: Now this is on this same project.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir. They didn't have the facilities at the time.

MAJ G: I have a map here, the Mt Whitney sectional chart, and I would like to know the routes that you flew from Goodsprings to a point prior to entering the prohibited area. Not necessarily in the prohibited area, but any route you would take and that you did take to point before entering this area.

CAPT K: After I would cancel my IFR with Las Vegas at Goodsprings I would proceed to the west of the range staying out in the valley in the clear and when I'd see Mercury, I'd head for Mercury.

MAJ G: This Mercury place is about halfway between what it shows here as Desert Rock and Indian Springs.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: And you stayed to the left of the Spring Mountains -- to the west side of the Spring Mountains.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: Were you ever over Goodsprings under IFR conditions on this mission? That is, when you couldn't readily cancel your IFR clearance?

CAPT K: Yes, the last day on my previous tour I had to go on in to Las Vegas on account of weather.

MAJ G: How did you receive your change to go to Las Vegas, was that on your own?

CAPT K: That was on my own.

MAJ G: You didn't receive any instructions.

CAPT K: Roger, I got a call from Las Vegas and got clearance.

MAJ G: Well, wait a minute. Did you receive any instructions from anyone else?

CAPT K: Oh yes, I was on my own.

MAJ G: It was strictly on your own. Have you ever experienced any real strong winds in this area?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir, I have. In fact, on both sides of the mountains I have experienced strong downdrafts and updrafts.

MAJ G: What were the highest winds that you had in that area?

CAPT K: Well, I believe around 30 knots per hour perhaps.

MAJ G: Do you have to report over all compulsory reporting points on this mission?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: The IFR points.

CAPT K: The IFR covers that.

MAJ G: How normally you go out here to Newhall and Palmdale and up.

CAPT K: Newhall and Palmdale, Daggett and on to Las Vegas.

MAJ G: Does ARTC ever request that you just report over Daggett or Palmdale without reporting over Newhall?

CAPT K: No, Sir, they never have.

MAJ G: They never have. Do you notice your EIA's on the ground at your destination? Do they have a board that you log in your EIA on or anything of that nature?

CAPT K: My destination? I'm not sure.

MAJ G: Why I asked that, I was wondering if you ever noticed any errors in the transmitting of your takeoff time here plus your time enroute to your point up there?

CAPT K: I'm not sure.

MAJ G: You've never had that happen to you?

CAPT K: No, Sir.

MAJ G: Were you and Lt Pappas together on all your briefings as far as where they were, at March and Headquarters USAF. You stayed together on all your briefings.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: Were you ever briefed that you would use your clearing authority only.

CAPT K: Yes, Sir. We were briefed that we would use our own clearance authority.

MAJ G: Do you know whether Lt Pappas had his own clearing authority?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir. He had a green card.

MAJ G: Do you know when he took that green card, by chance?

CAPT K: He took it just before he started this mission, I believe.

MAJ G: You didn't give it to him, or anything like that?

CAPT K: No, Sir. I presume it was one of the flight examiners, probably in his flight, that gave him a green instrument card check.

MAJ G: Do you have it pretty well firmed up in your own mind what you would do over Joodsprings if you were still under instrument conditions?

CAPT K: Well, I know what I did do, and what I would do again.

MAJ G: Would you state again what you did do on that one trip?

CAPT K: What I would do is get clearance from Las Vegas radio and proceed on to Las Vegas.

MAJ G: Would you hold over Goodsprings until you had received clearance?

CAPT K: Yes, I'd just stay in the clear.

MAJ G: Well, of course you're not in the clear yet, you're on instruments, you have to do something. Do you have anything further to offer that might help us in this investigation?

CAPT K: No, I don't believe I do, Sir.

MAJ G: Are you serviced with oxygen here at Lockheed Air Terminal?

CAPT K: Yes, they have oxygen here.

MAJ G: Is it a policy to insure that you have it at all times?

CAPT K: Yes, Sir.

MAJ G: Lt Smith, do you have anything you'd like to say about this investigation that might help in prevention of other accidents?

LT S: I believe it's been pretty well covered. There is one point I'd like to make about the clearance at Goodsprings. I would try to anticipate the time of arrival if I was in weather and obtain clearance from Las Vegas.

MAJ G: Captain, what operational procedures have been changed that were not in effect when you were flying this mission before?

CAPT K: Our departure time has been changed from 0700 to 0800 each weekday morning except Monday. We still take off at 0700 Mondays. Our departure time up there has been changed from 1600 to 1400.

MAJ G: What was this to insure, crew rest?

CAPT K: Better crew rest also we continue on into Las Vegas and cancel our IFR there and proceed on to our destination on VFR. Also we check in with the Nellis tower to insure a 10,000 foot ceiling in order to proceed on in.

MAJ G: Have any other weather requirements been changed?

CAPT K: We have to make a personal weather check here at Burbank, which I've always done anyway.

MAJ G: Then you go to the CAA weather office each morning?

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CAPT K: Yes, Sir. I go over there instead of calling.

MAJ G: Well, Sir, I want to thank you again for your help in this. Hope it helps some and we can find out something.

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